

Lunatic Asylum (now "Mills Building,"
South Carolina State Hospital)
Bull Street and Elmwood Avenue (Northeast corner)
Columbia
Richland County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-253

HABS
SC
40-COLUM
7-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

LUNATIC ASYLUM
(NOW "MILLS BUILDING," SOUTH CAROLINA STATE HOSPITAL)40-COLUM.
7-

Location: Northeast corner of
Bull Street and Elmwood Avenue, Columbia,
Richland County, South Carolina

Present Owner
and Occupant: South Carolina State Hospital

Present Use: Nurses' residence

Brief Statement
of Significance: This institution was the first to give recognition to the fact that mental illness could be treated. Patients were placed in pleasant surroundings for treatment--not kept as prisoners or animals. Robert Mills considered this in his design.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Has been in continuous use by the hospital--for patients from 1827 until 1936 and for housing and training nurses since that time.
2. Date of erection: 1825-1827.
3. Architect: Robert Mills.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Original plans by Architect Robert Mills are at the South Carolina Archives Department in Columbia; photocopies of these have been included in this book. These plans cover the center section and two flanking wings. Plans of the remaining wings are available from measured drawings by Lafaye, Fair, Lafaye and Associates, Columbia, South Carolina, who remodeled the building and installed modern lighting, plumbing, and heating.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: It is known from hospital records that Robert Mills built the center section and the first portions of the flanking wings in 1825-1827. The next portion of the wing to the east was added in 1838 and the next portion of the wing to the west, in 1842. These both were from Mills' plan and probably were designed by him. The end portions of the flanking wings were requested to be constructed in 1848. However, since the records have been lost, it is not known whether they were built then or by whom. All evidence points to the likelihood that these were done by Samuel Sloan. It is certain that these end portions were erected prior to 1860.

The original structure was enclosed with brick wall on four sides forming exercise areas. An engraving made by E. DeVillers, a Columbia artist, about 1860 shows this wall with the center portion lower and topped by iron fence. In this wall were a wide carriage gate in the center and two small gates to the right and left of it. Around 1875 the campus was enlarged and the wall on the north and east sides removed. While the record is not positively clear, there is reason to believe that these gates were reset in the extended wall on Calhoun Street, to form a campus entrance at the end of Pickens Street. There is evidence of the joining of the old and later brickwork immediately to the west of one of the smaller gates. The extended wall, running several blocks on Calhoun Street, enclosed the larger campus on which Samuel Sloan built the Main (administration) building and the Taylor building. This main building is noted by Sloan as the "Center" building and was built in 1883. The record shows Sloan working at the hospital as early as 1858 and mentions work on the "old" (Mills) building but is not specific as to the work done.

6. Sources of information:

- a. South Carolina Acts & Resolutions - 1823, Page 35.
- b. South Carolina Reports & Resolutions - 1842, Page 99.
- c. Lunatic Asylum - Annual Report - 1848
- d. Fifty-Ninth Annual Report of the South Carolina Lunatic Asylum - 1881-82, and
Sixty-First Annual Report of the South Carolina Lunatic Asylum - 1883-84.
- e. "Architects of Charleston," Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel, P. 114-115. Also P. 116.
- f. Journal of the American Institute of Architects - June 1948.
- g. South Carolina Reports & Resolutions - 1822, P. 103.
- h. "Geography of South Carolina," W. G. Simms - 1843, P. 19.

B. Supplemental Material: The following is quoted from a paper presented by Walter F. Petty to the Arts Club at the Mills Building, on January 9, 1961:

"The Architecture and the Architects of the 'Mills Building'
SOUTH CAROLINA STATE HOSPITAL

"In my few remarks to you today, I shall try to point out the significant features and importance of this building, now serving as the Nurses'

Home for the South Carolina State Hospital. Before going into the history of the building itself, I believe you would like to know more about the Architects whose work it is.

"We have recorded proof that the original building, consisting of the center section and one angular wing on the east and west sides, and completed in 1827, was designed by South Carolina's great Architect of the last century, Robert Mills. South Carolina Acts & Resolutions - 1823, p. 35 The first addition to this building was completed in 1838 and a second wing added in 1842. South Carolina Reports & Resolutions - 1842, p. 99 In 1848 request was made for two more wings, Lunatic Asylum - Annual Report - 1848 but whether these were constructed immediately is not definitely shown by the records. The additions appear to have been made in possibly four stages, and it is not clear regarding the Architect for these additions.

"Samuel Sloan, a Philadelphian, who appears to have traveled and slept in as many places as George Washington, was doing work at the hospital in 1882-83. The record is clear that he did the "Center" building (now Administration) in 1883, and the architectural detail indicates he may have done the South wing of the main building in 1858 and the North wing in 1879. Fifty-Ninth Annual Report of the South Carolina Lunatic Asylum - 1881-82, and Sixty-First Annual Report of the South Carolina Lunatic Asylum - 1883-84. The record does show that he did work on the 'old' building (Mills Building), but what, is not indicated.

"Mills was born in or around Charleston in 1781, and died in Washington, D.C., in 1855. Sloan was born in Philadelphia in 1815 and died in Raleigh in 1884. During their combined life span of 103 years, these two men made major contributions to the Architectural heritage of America, and to me it is unique that the talents of both are preserved here in one building. Mills was the great exponent of the classic tradition, particularly the Greek Revival, while Sloan ranged the field from the Gothic Revival of the Masonic Temple in Philadelphia, the Italian Renaissance formality of the Joseph Harrison (later Stotesbury) House in Philadelphia, to the Moorish Villa 'Longwood', in Natches, Mississippi. Sloan exhibited his talents in this building by adding to the work of Mills in such a way that the structure appears to be the work of one man. I unhesitatingly rate this building as a historic structure of national importance in the architectural development of America.

"Mills lived in Charleston until around 1800. He returned to Charleston for a brief period in 1804, and again in 1817. Returning to South Carolina in 1820, he practiced his profession in the state until 1829, interrupted by a brief period in Baltimore in 1824. The great majority of his work in this state was done between 1820 and 1829. After leaving South Carolina, he made his home in Washington until his death in 1855. "Architects of Charleston," Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel, pp. 114-115. He was buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington in an unmarked grave. Edward Bateman Morris, F.A.I.A., of Washington, D. C., sparked the effort to place a suitable marker here

and in 1935 was responsible for the present monument of North Carolina Granite which was paid for by the contributions of Architects around the country, especially from South Carolina. A photograph taken in 1948 shows the area around the monument grown up in weeds. /Journal of the American Institute of Architects - June 1948/

"Mills studied under James Hoban, (Architect of the White House), Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Henry Latrobe. He was an assistant to Latrobe during the construction of the National Capitol. /"Architect of Charleston," p. 116./ He is best known to the public as the Architect for the Washington Monument, although his work is scattered throughout South Carolina and in such varied places as Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Augusta, Mobile and New Orleans. He claimed to be the first native born American who had studied to be an Architect, the others having entered the profession from other trades or as amateurs. His architecture is characterized by his capable and unerring, but sometimes unorthodox, treatment of classic motifs. His use of the high basement and porticos, supported on arcades, his great interest in fire resistant construction, and his frequent use of round headed single windows and flat headed triple windows, is typical. He often tempered the severity of his design with curving steps, as is done on this building. It is very typical of his design that his buildings look their best in brilliant sunlight, each slight raised surface or detail thrown into high relief. In his WICKHAM HOUSE in Richmond, now a part of the Valentine Museum, he proved his ability to use ornament in profusion, and having done so, preferred the austerity and simplicity in his designs. His public buildings have an almost mathematical quality.

"Robert Mills was a man of many talents, among them his interest in navigation canals, railroads, Cartography and bridge design. Among published writings, his 'Atlas' and 'Statistics of South Carolina', are remarkably accurate and useful works. In 1821 he published 'Inland Navigation', a plan for a great canal between Charleston and Columbia, and in 1822 'Internal Improvement in South Carolina'. He presented the subject of the 'Railroad System', to the Legislature of South Carolina who treated it as too visionary, but it so impressed commercial interests, that a company was formed to build a railroad from Charleston to Hamburg, on the Savannah River. This road, when built in 1833, was the world's longest passenger steam railroad. Other than furnishing the idea, Mills seems to have had nothing to do with the company.

"And now a few remarks about this building. It was among the first authorized, and was the third completed mental hospital in America built with public funds. The original appropriation for building and grounds was \$30,000.00. The appropriation read, '----to be erected of brick and stone, covered with slate or tile ----'. Investigation further reported that, '---to complete the same on a plan --- creditable to the State---will cost \$37,281.00 with an additional \$9,219.00 to build a brick wall surrounding the lot, pipes for the water, and necessary outbuildings'. /South Carolina Reports & Resolutions - 1822, p. 103/ The corner stone was laid in July, 1822, and the building was

ready for patients in 1827. The first patient was admitted December 12, 1828. The corner stone is no longer in evidence, and my assumption is that it was covered up with the wing and additions. As finished and furnished, the building was reported 'imposing in externals, very spacious and proof against fire --- it is large enough to accommodate 120 patients and the total cost approaches \$100,000.00. / "Geography of South Carolina," W. G. Simms - 1843, p. 12/ At the time of construction, Mills was State Architect, 1820-1827. The South Carolina Year Book, 1908, quotes Mills as writing, '---the building combines --- elegance with permanency, economy and security from fire --- the facade represents a center and two wings, with a cupola for ventilating the upper stories. The entrance of the center building is under a grand portico of six massive Greek Doric columns, four feet in diameter, elevated on an open arcade and rising the entire height of the wing buildings; the whole surmounted with a pediment ---'. The roof garden has been hailed as the first in America. Mills' ingenuity and humanitarianism are shown in more than one feature of the design. Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel in her excellent book 'The Architects of Charleston', quotes the Charleston Courier - February 21, 1824, as follows, '---Not the smallest appearance of a prison is manifest in the building. Security is agreeably disguised under appearances familiar to the eye in every private house. The iron bars take the similitude of sashes; the hinges and locks of the doors are all secret; so that every temptation is put out of the way to make an escape---'. Here then is one of the first examples of the new thought in regard to those unfortunate people who were mentally ill. Care and treatment for recovery and humane therapy become more important than maximum jail-like security.

"I shall give you a few examples of Mills' architectural achievements, in addition to the Washington Monument. The Circular Congregational Church, Charleston, (burned in 1861); Monumental Methodist Church, Richmond; Bethesda Presbyterian Church, Camden; First Baptist Church, Charleston; A wing to the County Jail; the 'Fireproof' building on Meeting Street, and the Old Marine Hospital, all in Charleston. This building, the second Ainsley Hall Mansion on Blanding Street (until recently the Columbia Bible College), and the Maxey Gregg Monument on the University campus in Columbia. Among the many court houses in South Carolina attributed to Mills (some now destroyed) are Williamsburg, Newberry, Greenville, and York Counties; and jails in York, Lancaster, Union and Spartanburg. He is known to have designed the old Court House in Camden, and is said to have done those in Winnsboro and Marlboro, while the appearance and detail of those in Walterboro, Conway and Georgetown indicate they were of his design.

"And now a few words about Samuel Sloan. It is not so easy to pin down his career as it is that of Mills. We do know that he was born in Philadelphia in 1815 and practiced there as an Architect until 1882. He then moved to Raleigh and lived there until his death in 1884. Sloan was rated a major expert on Hospitals for the insane. He is credited with doing such buildings in Alabama, Kentucky, Michigan,

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, Connecticut, Minnesota, North Carolina and South Carolina. Not all of the above are now identifiable. Harold Cooledge, Associate Professor of Architecture at Clemson College, published a check list of Sloan's work for the years 1849 to 1884 in the March, 1960, issue of the 'Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians', and lists therein Eight public buildings such as Court Houses and Jails; seven civic buildings; Twenty-two public schools and colleges; Four private schools; Thirteen hospitals for the insane; Two general hospitals; Twenty-two churches and church buildings; Twenty commercial buildings, and Thirty-seven residences; with the above scattered over thirteen states, ranging from Minnesota to Mississippi and all points in between. This explains my previous remark that Sloan must have slept in as many places as George Washington.

"As a parting point of interest, South Carolina Reports and Resolutions of 1883, Volume I, pages 393 to 429 list the following payments to Sloan:

December	- 1882 - Architectural Drawings	\$500.00
January	- 1883 - Hotel Bill	65.00
February	- 1883 - Plans, Etc.	85.00
March	- 1883 - Architect's Fees	125.00
May	- 1883 - Professional Fees	80.00
June	- 1883 - Services	100.00
July	- 1883 - -----	50.00
September	- 1883 - -----	25.00
October	- 1883 - Salary & Expense	25.00

"One wonders what the July and September payments covered, and where Sloan spent the months of April and August. And now let us look around the building and discuss its architecture."

Prepared by Walter F. Petty, AIA Preservation
Officer, South Carolina Chapter
July 1961

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An early and good insane asylum by Robert Mills, later added to by Samuel Sloan. This building is of unusual interest in that it was among the first authorized, and the third completed, hospital for the mentally ill paid for by State funds. It is an excellent example of the work of Robert Mills, who introduced several innovations, including "fireproof construction," iron bars spaced to resemble muntins, locks of doors all secret, and a hot-air heating system.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Three stories on a raised basement with a fourth story over the center section only. Irregular--center block with flanking wings set back at an angle.
2. Foundations: Brick, Flemish bond, with each fifth course recessed to give horizontal emphasis. Arcaded under portico, with five brick arches.
3. Wall construction: Stone belt course at first floor. Solid brick walls, 21" and 17", in Flemish bond. Brick pilasters in Flemish bond at corners of central pavilion.
3. Porches: Large projecting hexastyle prostyle portico on front of central (Mills) pavilion--plain unfluted Tuscan columns, without bases. This portico is constructed of stuccoed brick, has a heavy but simple entablature and low pediment with a three-part multi-pane segmental arch window. On each side of the portico is a flight of graceful curved stone stairs to the ground with a simple wrought-iron railing. The rear porch indicated on Mills' drawing has been removed, as have the end porches (east and west wings), evidence of which remains.
4. Chimneys: Four large chimneys (not visible from ground) have been bricked up.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There is a front entrance doorway on the ground floor level under the portico, and a front entrance doorway on the portico level. This portico doorway has double doors, each with four panels, with a large fan light over it, pilaster trim with brick arch above. There is a door at the rear on the main floor level in the circular stair tower, and a door at each end of the buildings, which is not used since the porches have been removed.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Double-hung wood sash, twelve-lights over twelve-lights, with arch heads on first floor and flat keystone arches on upper floors of front facade. On the rear, nine-light over nine-light double-hung wood sash, with filled panel and head on the first floor and flat keystone arches on the upper floors. In the basement there are small six-light over six-light windows, except on the front of the central pavilion, where they have arch heads. There are no shutters.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Flat-type, copper-covered roof with brick parapet.
- b. Cornice: Simple brick and stucco cornice.
- c. Cupola: Cupola at rear of central pavilion over apsidal stair hall. Octagonal sixteen-light sash on each side. Simple cornice and dermical roof.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: (Each floor is basically similar.) Center hall, front to rear, with cross hall running the length of the building. New stair in apsidal projecting rear of central pavilion. Smaller stairs at each side.
2. Stairways: The main stair is in a semicircular tower on the main axis. It has two runs, with curved landing, a fluted, column-like newel, simple rail and baluster. There are two minor stairways in the angle between the center and angular wings. These stairs have monolithic stone steps, cantilevered from the wall. These have two runs and simple iron railings.
3. Flooring: Wood, in later wings, on wood joists. Original center section on brick arch system--floors were originally of tile, but now are vinyl tile on cement fill.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Segmental-arch barrel vaults in transverse halls; groin vaults in center hall and rooms; plaster finish to walls and ceiling.
4. Doorways and doors: Simple three-panel doors are original. Later replacements have two panels. Simple molded architraves. Transoms over doors.
5. Trim: Simple trim is Federal style. There are baseboards, chair rails, and paneled reveals to doors and architraves to doors and arches.
6. Hardware: Modern, except for front entrance butts.
7. Lighting: Conventional electric. Formerly gas and oil.
8. Heating: Fireplaces have been bricked up. There are four original mantles with Greek Doric column treatment, that are now in private residences. There is now hot-water heating with radiators.

D. Site: The building faces northwest onto the campus-like grounds of the hospital. The hospital grounds are bounded on the north by Elmwood Avenue, on the east by Pickens Street, on the west by Bull Street, and on the south by Calhoun Street.

1. Outbuildings: Other hospital buildings.
2. Walks, driveways: Several driveways and walks around building; parking in rear.
3. Landscaping: Mature planting of trees, shrubs, and lawns in campus-like setting.

Prepared by Walter F. Petty, AIA Preservation
Officer, South Carolina Chapter
July 1961

AND

James C. Massey, Architect
National Park Service
July 1961

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